

California Polytechnic State University

Mobile in their home

Poly class project widens doors, replaces floors for disabled man
Lindsay Christians and Michaela Baltazar and Michaela Baltas
The Tribune

NIPOMO - Thanks to a Cal Poly engineering class, a disabled Nipomo man and his wife returned home Sunday to a house remodeled for easier wheelchair access.

"It was more than I expected," said Joyce Babros, who cried when she saw their redesigned home on Blue Springs Lane. "It looked like a new house."

The house -- now equipped with new floors, ceiling fans and a large bathroom with a shower into which Ed Babros can easily maneuver his wheelchair -- was unveiled Sunday evening.

"You're spoiling me," her husband, Ed Babros, added when he saw the bathroom.

Twenty-five students from an advanced industrial manufacturing and engineering class completed most of the work on Ed and Joyce Babros' house between Friday and Sunday.

The project was a hands-on learning experience that combined classroom lessons with community service.

While students ripped out the floor, widened doors and painted the two-bedroom home, the couple stayed in a motel in San Luis Obispo and waited for them to finish.

Under the direction of their professor, Roya Javadpour, students spent two months planning for two short weekends of work, splitting into smaller teams that had to stay on budget, develop contingency options and plan the remodel from top to bottom.

Javadpour found the Babroses through Life Steps Foundation, a nonprofit community service group with an office in downtown San Luis Obispo.

"We went to (the Babroses) and asked for their wish list in terms of what they would like to be done to their home," Javadpour said. "We're doing this with no funding at all."

The Babroses, both in their late 60s, picked out new paint colors donated by San Luis Paints to cover the yellowy spring green that had once permeated the house.

In addition, easy-access shelves were installed.

Supplies for the assignment came from about 35 community donors listed on the project Web site,

<http://www.polyhouse.org/>. Javadpour estimated their total value at \$10,000.

Ed Babros, who uses a wheelchair because of a fused right knee and a hip replacement, will benefit from Matthew Tanner's attentions to his bathroom.

"Anything handicapped accessible takes a lot of money and time," said Tanner, an engineering and business student. "It was pretty cramped before."

Tanner's bathroom remodeling team changed the placement of the sink and shower, widened the doorway and laid flat tile on the floor.

"If you asked a contractor to do a job like this in two weekends, he'd tell you you're crazy," Tanner said.

Students put shelves in the garage during the weekend of May 14, but the rest of the work was scheduled for Friday through Sunday.

"It's hard to imagine that all the work can happen in such a short amount of time," said Lisa Takeuchi, also an engineering and business student. "If you'd asked me two months ago if I thought I could do this, I'd have said no way."

Takeuchi's team laid laminate flooring that had the appearance of hardwood in the Babros' living area. Takeuchi said before the project that no one on her team knew anything about flooring.

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